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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANAA 000619

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR L AND NEA/ARP: AMACDONALD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/13/2019

TAGS: JUS EFIN ETRD PGOV YM

SUBJECT: ROYG OFFENDED BY DOJ CLAIM OF CORRUPTION, SEEKS
REDRESS

Classified By: Ambassador Stephen A. Seche for reasons reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d)

¶1. (U) This is an action request. Please see Para 7.

¶2. (C) Deputy Foreign Minister Mohyadeen al-Dhabbi called in the Ambassador in April 12 to express the concern of the ROYG regarding assertions made by the Department of Justice that senior government officials and other influential Yemenis, including a son of President Saleh, received illegal payments from a U.S. telecom company. Dhabbi asked for the Ambassador's assistance in receiving from DoJ the evidence on which these assertions are based or, conversely, a public retraction of these allegations.

¶3. (C) Similar sentiments were expressed on April 11 in a phone call to the Ambassador from Mohamed Sudam, President Saleh's private interpreter and advisor. Sudam said that Saleh was angry that the reputation of his family had been "defamed," adding that the ROYG was considering legal action against the USG for publicly making charges for which there is no basis in fact.

¶4. (C) Dhabbi's tone was less strident but no less urgent as he described the political price President Saleh is paying at the hands of Yemen's political opposition, keen to portray the ruling family as corrupt. "The opposition is insisting that Ahmed Ali is the 'son of the President' referred to in the documents," Dhabbi said. (Note. Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh is the commander of Yemen's Republican Guard and President Saleh's heir apparent. End Note.)

¶5. (C) Dhabbi said that the ROYG would like the DoJ to share all evidence it can that will substantiate its claim of involvement by influential Yemeni citizens) up to and including a son of the President) in corrupt practices with Latin Node Inc. He also insisted that, if the basis for the claim is simply the assertion of one or more individual, without hard evidence that can be independently corroborated, then DoJ owes the government of Yemen, and the family of the President, a public apology.

¶6. (C) Dhabbi claimed that the ROYG has opened its own investigation into these charges, and would use any evidence provided by the USG in support of these investigations. He specifically requested the following:

a) bank records of 17 payments totaling approximately USD1.15 million that, according to court documents, were "made either directly to Yemeni officials, or to Yemen Partner A with the knowledge that some or all of the money would be passed along to Yemeni officials."

b) "company emails" cited in the April 7 DoJ press release that "indicate that the intended recipients of these illegal payments included, but were not limited to, the son of the Yemeni president, the vice president of operations at

TeleYemen, the Yemeni government-owned telecommunications company, other officials at TeleYemen, and officials from the Yemeni Ministry of Telecommunications."

¶7. (SBU) Action request: Post requests that the appropriate office at State query DoJ to see if it is possible to provide the ROYG the documentation it has in its possession that will substantiate public assertions of senior Yemeni involvement in the illegal payments to which Latin Node Inc. has pled guilty.

SECHE